

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT & BOARD OF HEALTH

### Fiscal Year 2013

The mission of the Amherst Board of Health, working through the Health Department, is to promote the health and wellbeing of our community. We fulfill this mission through our core functions: assessment, assurance, promotion, and policy development.

**Assurance:** ensuring all Amherst residents have the services necessary to maintain or restore good health either by coordinating the delivery of services by other agencies, by policy or regulation development, or by providing services directly.

**Assessment:** systematically collecting, assembling, analyzing, and making available information regarding the health of the community, including statistics on health status, community health needs, and epidemiological studies of health problems.

**Promotion:** providing services and educational opportunities that encourage healthy environments and healthy lifestyles.

**Policy Development:** development and implementation of comprehensive public Health policies, regulations and legislation.

The work of the Amherst Health Department is organized into six major areas: Access to Health Care, Infectious Disease Control, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Environmental Health, Health Policy and Emergency Planning and Preparedness.

#### I. Access to Health Care

Ensuring access to health care for all Amherst residents continues to be a priority for the Health Department. Some of the departmental programs helping to address this concern are Hampshire Health Connect, Casa Latina and “Peace in the Family: a Khmer Community Project.”

##### **Hampshire Health Connect**

Hampshire Health Connect (HHC) is a nonprofit organization created by a group of citizens, providers and representatives of local government, businesses, and insurers. HHC aims to link families and individuals who are underinsured or who have no health insurance with insurance programs they may be eligible for, or to medical providers willing to see HHC patients at no charge or on a sliding fee scale. HHC is housed at Cooley Dickinson Hospital.

HHC provides the services of a Latina caseworker, who has been working in the Amherst Health Department offices to enroll all Amherst residents, but especially those whose first language is Spanish, into a health care program. The enactment of Health Care Reform has had a great impact on the work of Hampshire Health Connect. Many who believed they were ineligible for state benefits are now seeking the help of HHC to enroll in the Commonwealth Care Programs. As a result, Amherst residents’ participation in HHC, and the number of Latino clients served by HHC continues to rise. During FY 13, 189 Amherst residents accessed HHC services at the Bangs Community Center.

## **II. Infectious Disease Control**

Controlling the spread of communicable diseases and food-borne illnesses is an important function of the Health Department.

Infectious Disease Surveillance and Control during FY13 included the following:

- 1 cases of active Tuberculosis (Tb).
- 10 cases of Tb prevention and control.
- Three senior flu clinics in conjunction with the Council on Aging: 221 doses of seasonal influenza vaccine administered; and 10 doses of pneumonia vaccine administered.
- Two influenza clinics for town employees and their families: 330 doses of flu vaccine administered and 10 doses of tetanus administered.
- Two outreach influenza clinics for underserved populations: 19 doses of vaccine administered.
- Monthly immunization clinics
  - Total: 274
  - 18 yo and <: 182
  - 19 yo and >: 92

The Public Health Nurse provided case management and/or follow up for 67 reportable infectious diseases:

Amebiasis:1 Babesiosis: 4; Campylobacteriosis:4 ; Giardiasis: 5; GroupA Strep:1, GroupB Strep 1; Haemophilus Influenzae: 1; Hepatitis A: 1; Hepatitis B 2; Hepatitis C:8; Influenza:18; Lyme: 7 Perussis:8; Polio: 1; Salmonella: 3; Strep Pneumoniae 1; Varicella: 1.

## **III. Disease Prevention and Health Promotion**

Programs aimed at promoting health and preventing disease is another important aspect of the Health Department's work. Programs and interventions are targeted to the general public, as well as specific groups at increased health risk due to their particular demographic group, or the consequences of their own behavior, or the behavior of others.

### **High Risk Groups**

The Health Director and Inspectors work together as a team to address the multi-faceted problem of hoarding via joint inspections including mental health assessments and referrals to social services.

Town of Amherst Handicapped Permits are available to residents of Amherst who have a temporary or chronic condition that substantially limits their mobility. This permit allows residents to park in handicapped spaces within the Town of Amherst. This permit WILL NOT extend parking privileges beyond Town limits or the area colleges. A permit may be obtained from the Amherst Health Department. A doctor's certificate stating the condition and the expected duration of the disability is required.

#### **IV. Environmental Issues**

The Board of Health is required by state statute to perform many pertinent duties relating to the protection of public health, disease control and to advocate sanitary living conditions. The Health Department's inspectional staff consists of two Inspectors: one full-time and one part-time. Their responsibility is to regulate the laws, administer permits and perform inspections of residences and businesses relating to food. This fiscal year, the department successfully conducted 1155 inspections and issued 367 Town permits.

#### **Food Safety**

The Health Department inspected 300 food handlers during the 2013 fiscal year. We administer permits for all food handlers encompassing: restaurants, recreational camps, bed and breakfast operations, residential kitchens, college institutions, hotels, motels, retail food stores, schools, mobile food units, temporary events, caterers, bakeries, and frozen food establishments.

The department's routine inspections and follow-up are crucial to protecting the public's welfare. The division enforces Chapter X of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standard for Food Establishments, 105 CMR 590.000. These state laws allow the Town of Amherst to conduct inspections, issue orders and suspend or revoke permits where necessary.

Health Department staff works collaboratively with local restaurants to ensure compliance with the Federal Food Code. The code requires all restaurants to have a person in charge (PIC) who has knowledge of food-borne disease prevention and application of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. Inspectors continue to monitor food managers to ensure obtainment of their Food Manager Certification and to develop a food protection program.

#### **Body Art Establishments**

There are two Body Art Establishments and 10 licensed practitioners in Amherst. The inspectors conducted 2 inspections.

#### **Swimming Pools**

No person shall operate or maintain any swimming, wading or special purpose pool without obtaining a permit from the Health Department. The permit shall be subject to the requirements of 105 CMR 435.00 and to any regulations as may be adopted by the Board of Health, provided, however, that said local Board of Health regulations shall not be applicable to a state owned or operated swimming, wading or special purpose pool. The Health Department issued 15 swimming pool permits, and conducted 28 inspections.

#### **Recreational Camps**

We continue to perform extensive monitoring and inspections to sustain quality and assurance of compliance. This fiscal year there were 38 recreational camps. The total number of inspections conducted for recreational camps is 59.

Throughout the year we receive new information from the Community Sanitation Program. The Department makes every effort to forward the new material and information to all of our camp operators in a timely manner and these packets are now made available online.

**Housing**

The Health Department responds to nuisance and housing complaints and enforces Chapter II of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standards of Fitness for Human Habitation, M.G.L. c.111, ss. 127A and 127B: 105 CMR 410.000. Upon request or upon the department's initiative the Health Department can certify violations, issue orders, hold hearings, grant variances and institute court proceedings if needed to enforce orders. This fiscal year the Inspectors conducted 237 inspections including fraternities, sororities and voucher program related issues.

M.G.L. c.111, s.122, allows the Health Department to investigate nuisances which in the Board's opinion may be injurious to the public health. The Health Department may destroy, prevent or remove such nuisances and make regulations relative to these issues. There were 60 nuisance complaints mostly involving trash. All nuisance complaints were addressed and abated.

**Septic System**

The Environmental Health Department enforces the State 310 CMR 15.000, Environmental Code, Title 5: Standard requirements for the siting, construction, inspection, upgrade, expansion of on-site sewage treatment, for the transport and disposal of septage. This fiscal year the Inspectors conducted 13 percolation tests and 15 septic system finals. In FY13, the Inspectors conducted 29 Title V inspections.

**Septage and Garbage**

The Health Department enforces Title V of the State Environmental Code; Minimum Requirements for the Subsurface Disposal of Sewage, 310 CMR 15.00. We've issued 15 permits for the removal or transportation of garbage and offal this fiscal year.

**V. Emergency Preparedness**

The Health Department continues to develop a group of medical and non-medical volunteers through the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program. There are currently 34 members on the Amherst MRC roster. The Amherst MRC has held training sessions since the fall of 2004. The group is trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) operations, Shelter Operations, and other public health emergency and disaster preparedness-related topics. Health Department staff is involved in several local preparedness organizations such as the Hampshire Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition and Five College Public Safety Emergency Preparedness.

**VI. Health Policy and Planning**

During FY13 the Board of Health was comprised of the following members: Chairman David Ahlfeld, Diane Amsterdam, MD, Nancy Gilbert, Julie Marcus, Maureen O'Leary, and Ilana Schmitt, MD. Ilana Schmitt, MD resigned from her position mid-year and Diane Amsterdam, MD was appointed to fill the vacated seat. The Board of Health, under Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) as well as state and local regulations, is responsible for setting, composing and enforcing policies and regulations which promote and protect the public health of Amherst residents and visitors.

The Board of Health approved amendments to the *Amherst Regulations for Body Art Establishments*. The amendments include prohibiting body piercing for patrons under the age of 14 years; prohibiting the piercing of the tongue, nipples, or lips for patrons under the age of 18 years; require persons under the age of 18 years to be accompanied by a properly identified parent, legal custodial parent, or legal guardian.

As required by the Department of Environmental Protection, the Board of Health developed a regulation to define the area near the Atkins Reservoir and its associated water bodies known as Zone A. This regulation also restricts certain activities in Zone A. A Public Hearing was held on October 25, 2012 in order to accept comment. The new regulation was adopted by a Board of Health vote and became effective March 1, 2013.

The Board of Health began an exploration of scientific evidence as they engaged in discussions concerning tobacco use and protecting the public health. The Board of Health discussed and reviewed policies to restrict the sale of tobacco products and the sale and use of nicotine delivery products. Their discussions included cigar packaging parameters, banning the sale of blunt wraps, banning the sale of tobacco in health care institutions (pharmacies) and capping and reducing the number of tobacco permits available in Amherst. At their final meeting of FY13, the Board of Health held a public hearing to receive public comment regarding a proposed tobacco regulation entitled *Regulations Restricting the Sale and Use of Tobacco Products and Nicotine Delivery Products*. The Board of Health will continue their discussions regarding the proposed regulation in the upcoming year.

#### **FY13 Board of Health**

David Ahlfeld, Chair

Diane Amsterdam, MD (appointed: 3/2013)

Nancy Gilbert

Julie Marcus (appointed: 8/2012)

Maureen O'Leary (appointed: 11/2013)

Ilana Schmitt, MD (resigned: 11/2012)